



Australian Bureau of Statistics

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eCensus brings Antarctica closer

Expeditioners wintering in Australia's Antarctic territory will go online to complete their forms for Census night, Tuesday 8 August, taking advantage of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' new eCensus option.

For the first time in history, Census information from Casey, Davis, Mawson and Macquarie Island stations will be collected in a matter of hours. Previously the paper Census forms could only be processed once they were physically shipped out on the summer resupply voyages at the end of the year.

National Head of the Census, Paul Williams, said the Tasmanian Census Management Unit and the Australian Antarctic Division began coordinating the logistical side of Antarctic Census count late last year.

"The materials, including Census Form Numbers, a sealed envelope containing an eCensus PIN number which gives access to eCensus and Census Personal Guides, left for Antarctica on the summer voyages between January and March 2006," Mr Williams said.

"They'll be distributed by each of the four Station Leaders who'll take on the role of Special Census Collectors. In preparation for this they have already signed the ABS **Undertaking of Fidelity and Secrecy**."

Mr Williams said eCensus was an option available to all Australians.

"Testing suggests approximately 10% of the population, or around 800,000 households, will complete their Census form online. Of these, it's expected that 30% of these households (240,000) are likely to complete their form after 6pm on Census night, Tuesday 8 August, with a further 20% (160,000) likely to complete it the following day," Mr Williams said.

"The eCensus site for Census 2006 opened on Friday 28 July and householders can fill in their details for the night of Tuesday 8 August, until August 28."

The ABS has written to Internet Service Providers letting them know the eCensus is coming, so that there are no unnecessary barriers preventing people from using the eCensus.

The ABS is very confident of the integrity of the system and the security of the data. ABS officers will be monitoring the eCensus site closely.

The ABS chose IBM to develop and support its eCensus program because of IBM's expertise in web-based solutions and scalable infrastructure. eCensus information is encrypted at all times while in the system and IBM does not have the keys required to decrypt the data. This means that no-one outside the ABS can gain access to any eCensus data.

Interviews with Antarctic expeditioners are available on request, as are digital images of expeditioners completing the eCensus.

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